

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 305/93 Death threats/attempted extrajudicial killing 6 September 1993

PHILIPPINES: Sonny Boy de la Peña, 38 years

Edwina Bodozo Joromo, 33 years (female)

Amnesty International is urgently concerned for the safety of Sonny Boy de la Peña and Edwina Bodozo Joromo who are peasant organizers and human rights activists in Cebu. Both have received death threats and in July 1993 they were fired at by two members of an official government militia. They have since left their homes in Mag-Alwa, Tuburan, Cebu, in fear of their lives. Amnesty International calls upon the Philippine Government to act immediately to guarantee their safety and well-being.

Threats against the two peasant organizers began in June 1993, when Sonny Boy de la Peña, Chairman of the Mag-alwa Farmers' organization, received a letter in which he was threatened with death. He believes the letter was sent by local members of the military-backed Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU). Edwina Bodozo Joromo also reported that a CAFGU member had threatened to kill them both because they had assisted the work of human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the upland districts of Tuburan and Catmon. She said the CAFGU member had also warned her against denouncing CAFGU and police abuses to the media.

On 18 July at about 7pm Sonny Boy de la Peña and Edwina Bodozo Joromo were returning on foot to the Mag-alwa district when two CAFGU members and an unidentified policeman opened fire with M-16 and M-14 rifles, spraying the ground around them with bullets. Terrified, the two managed to escape, and subsequently left the district to live with relatives in another city.

In early May 1993, prior to the threats and harassment, Sonny Boy de la Peña and Edwina Bodozo Joromo had publicly testified to human rights violations and harassment by CAFGU members and members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) before the Vice-Governor of Cebu. It is widely believed that these actions provoked the local CAFGU and police to threaten and harass the two activists.

A charge of attempted murder has been filed with the courts, naming two CAFGU members and a policeman as those suspected of firing upon Sonny Boy de la Peña and Edwina Bodozo Joromo. However, the three suspects are believed to remain at large.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Harassment, death threats and other human rights violations have occurred against a background of armed conflict between government and government-backed forces and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The evidence clearly indicates that people who receive

death threats are at serious risk of extrajudicial execution or "disappearance". The majority of victims of human rights violations are civilians whose peaceful political, social, religious or human rights activities have brought them into conflict with government policy and practice. Such people are frequently accused or "labelled" by the military of being NPA sympathizers and their organizations named as "fronts" for the CPP/NPA. Once labelled in this way, individual activists or members of "front" organizations, are portrayed by the security forces as legitimate targets within the counter-insurgency campaign.

In the past two years the majority of extrajudicial executions in the Philippines have been perpetrated by CAFGU members. Amnesty International has repeatedly called upon the government to dismantle the CAFGU immediately.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing grave concern over the plight of Sonny Boy de la Peña and Edwina Bodozo Joromo;

- urging the authorities to act immediately to guarantee their safety and well-being;

- calling upon the government to ensure that those suspected of the attempted murder of the two activists are immediately suspended from active service, apprehended and brought promptly to justice before a civil court.

- reiterating Amnesty International's call for the CAFGU to be dismantled immediately.

APPEALS TO

1) President Fidel Ramos
Malacañang Palace
Manila
Philippines

Telegrams: President Ramos, Malacañang, Manila

Salutation: Dear President Ramos

2) P/Sr. Supt. Warieto Capitan
Director, Regional Command 7 PNP
Camp Don Sergio Osmeña Sr.
Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City 6000
Philippines

Telegrams: P/Sr. Supt. Capitan, PNP Regional Command 7, Cebu City, Philippines

Salutation: Dear P/Sr. Supt Capitan

3) SP04 Federico Montebon
Chief, Tuburan PNP
Poblacion, Tuburan
Cebu
Philippines

Telegrams: SP04 Montebon, Tuburan PNP, Tuburan, Cebu

Salutation: Dear Chief Montebon

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Sedfrey Ordoñez
Chairman
Commission on Human Rights
IPB Building
Doña Julia Vargas Avenue
Pasig, Manila
Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 October 1993.